

Memorandum

To: Members of the Multi-Modal Transportation Task Force

From: Alan Wickman

Date: June 29, 2004

Subject: Recommended Changes to the Proposed Multi-Modal Transportation Final Reports

MOST IMPORTANT –

The report entitled, “Foster a Fully Integrated Multi-Use Pedestrian and Bicycle Network” provides a 10-year roadmap for expenditures on bike lanes and multi-use paths. For paths, there has been a great deal of study done over many years and one can judge the relative adequacy of the 10-year proposal contained in this document. With regard to bike lanes, however, there is no basis to judge the adequacy of the proposed funding versus the needs for bike lanes and other engineering of streets to make them friendlier for bicycles.

The proposed bike lane funding might purchase 5 miles of bike lanes over the next 10 years. That’s 5 miles over a 10-year period, not 5 miles per year. In contrast, the proposal for multi-use paths contemplates 45 miles over a 10-year period. Will 5 miles of bike lanes be adequate to, “foster a fully integrated multi-use pedestrian and bicycle system?” I strongly suspect that it would be woefully inadequate, but all that I could support that suspicion with is that I can think of a number of places around the city where it is difficult for a bicyclist to get from point “A” to point “B” without the need for a significant detour. I can’t ask you to recommend significantly increased funding based on nothing more than my hunch. That would be irresponsible.

As such, the first part of my recommendation is that bike lane funding be removed from this document. That doesn’t mean that bike lanes shouldn’t get any funding over the next 10 years, but simply that we don’t have sufficient information at this time to make a reasoned judgment of the funding that should be recommended.

The second part of my recommendation is that this report should be amended to give a charge to the Multi-Modal Transportation Coordinator to develop a working report identifying bicycle traffic engineering needs, opportunities, challenges and costs. (The reference to “bicycle traffic engineering” instead of “bike lanes” is intended to recognize the fact that there are on-street engineering responses to bicycling needs other than bike lanes.) This report will be presented and discussed with all interested persons and entities – those within city and county government, especially the Pedestrian-Bicycle Advisory Committee (PBAC), in addition to interested citizens and organizations. Following that process, the Coordinator would develop a formal report (that could be subject to regular updates over time) that would identify prioritized recommendations to address on-street bicycle engineering needs. It would receive the same sort of exposure as the first report. Then – and not before then – it would make good sense for policymakers to make judgments with regard to long-term funding recommendations.

After that, once a better sense of long-term funding is available, these recommendations can be integrated into a “comprehensive plan” for a bicycle and pedestrian network. At that time, the report envisioned by the Multi-Modal Transportation Coordinator on page 3 of the “Expand Multi-Modal Planning, Education and Services” report will make sense, because then the Coordinator would have a plan to address. Also, consistent with this approach, items (3) and (4) on page 4 of this same report would be amended. These items would have had the PBAC charged to develop a “comprehensive plan” for a bicycle and pedestrian network and to annually review and prepare a formal report on capital improvement programs and related policies of the City, County and State in meeting pedestrian and bicycle goals. Those items go far beyond what a citizen advisory committee should be expected to do. It would make much more sense to have the PBAC review these reports as they are presented to them by the Multi-Modal Transportation Coordinator.

OTHER CORRECTIONS & CHANGES –

Changes to the report “Expand Multi-Modal Planning, Education and Services” –

Page 9 – Under “Pedestrian and Bicycle Statutes” (sic), the document states that city law requires bicyclists to dismount and walk across intersections. That statement is incorrect.

Pages 9 & 16 – Page 9 recommends that staff from various city offices go through pedestrian and bicycle laws and make recommendations. Page 16 states that the PBAC “has expressed an interest in undertaking a review of the City’s pedestrian and bicycles statutes.” That is incorrect. We presented the PBAC with a proposal to undertake a review of bicycle-related statutes a year or so ago, but they declined to add it to their agenda. The PBAC has since considered changes to one specific bicycle-related area (dealing with crosswalks), but it has never indicated a general interest to look at bicycle-related statutes. In addition, I don’t recall that any proposal has ever been made with regard to pedestrian-related statutes. My recommendation is that the language from page 9 be used instead of the language from page 16.

Changes to the report “Foster a Fully Integrated Multi-Use Pedestrian and Bicycle System” –

Bottom of page 9 / top of page 10 – The statement is made that, “some existing bicycle routes may be evaluated for opportunities to provide bike lanes for the same reasons they were originally chosen to be on-street bike routes.” This statement doesn’t make good sense and should be removed. It sounds like a distillation of a much longer earlier suggestion that included the same suggestion, which was uniformly criticized by experienced bicyclists. Bike routes are chosen as such because they provide convenient routes on streets that are felt to be reasonably friendly for bicyclists. The fact that they are already friendly for bicyclists in their current condition argues against the installation of bike lanes on them.

Page 14 – The recommendation is made that, “The Public Works and Utilities Department should implement **bike lane facilities** in the Downtown area as directed by the Downtown Master Plan process that will begin during mid-2004.” This statement should be edited to remove the presumption that bike lanes will be recommended for the downtown area. There are ways other than bike lanes to engineer streets to make them more bicycle-friendly; it is quite possible that bike lanes would not be the best approach for making downtown Lincoln more bicycle-friendly.